

**DRAFT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**MAINTAINING DELTA AGRICULTURE**

**May 2013**



For web version of the paper, see <https://bdcpdf.water.ca.gov>

## **DRAFT Executive Summary**

### **AGRICULTURAL LAND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES**

#### **DISCUSSION PAPER**

##### **MAINTAINING DELTA AGRICULTURE**

Even with implementation of the mitigation measures and commitments proposed in the Spring 2013 Consultant Administrative Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS), there will still be impacts to Delta agriculture. This paper sets forth a menu of potential agricultural land stewardship strategies that can be considered by decision makers when discussing appropriate mitigation measures or enhancements that support the Delta as a place. The approach outlined in this document does not try to distinguish environmental from economic impacts.

The potential strategies listed in Table ES-1 and discussed in Chapter 1 were developed following conversations with Delta and other interests. See Attachment 4 of the Appendix for a list of individuals and agencies consulted. At this time, there is no agreement that any potential strategy be pursued as a result of this paper. The primary purpose of the paper is to get additional feedback from Delta interests with regard to whether these are strategies they would like to see implemented, whether they are adequately described and whether there are additional strategies that should be included. Some of the potential strategies are still in development.

We have included a Feedback Form at the end of this paper that can be used to comment on the potential strategies in this package, to provide ideas that could help with describing strategies under development, or to propose strategies not included. People wanting to review the documents can also go to <https://bdcpdf.water.ca.gov> where they can download copies and complete the Feedback Form on line. Comments received will be considered in subsequent versions of the strategy paper and be treated as public records. Requests to meet to discuss issues raised by the paper should be sent to [kspanos@water.ca.gov](mailto:kspanos@water.ca.gov)

It is expected that implementation of the strategies would be voluntary on the part of the landowner, farmer and local government; that it would not conflict with the implementation of ongoing ecosystem restoration or BDCP conservation measures; and that it would be consistent with state wide and regional policies.

This paper assumes that, with the exception of current estimates for BDCP project and mitigation costs, additional funding will be necessary to implement any one of the strategies. Such funding could be part of a bond program, cap and trade revenues, greenhouse gas emission reduction programs or other sources still to be determined. There are a number of institutional structures that could be used or built upon to distribute funds that might be developed.

Implementation of a strategy could be carried out with regard to one or more of three different kinds of activities. Chapter 2 provides more discussion on implementation and funding.

- BDCP planning to include agricultural considerations
- An Optional Agricultural Land Stewardship Approach for a CEQA/NEPA mitigation package for BDCP
- Enhancements for the Delta as a place, consistent with the Delta Plan.

Potential strategies are organized in four categories:

- Strategies to help maintain farming in the Delta
- Strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland
- Strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production
- Strategies that provide for economic development and other benefits

The discussion of each strategy covers its topics in the following order:

- Description of the strategy
- Related policies and program
- Issues
- BDCP and EIR/EIS
- Opportunities and potential partners

The Background Document to this paper, which is available on request, is a source document for information in the BDCP and the EIR/EIS relating to effects on agriculture in the Delta. Section I of the Background Document describes the process that led to the development of this paper. Section II describes the impacts of BDCP on agriculture in the Delta and provides an overview for the Sections that follow. Section III describes the mitigation measures and commitments that are in the current administrative drafts of the BDCP and EIR/EIS that relate to these impacts. See [Table 2-1](#) for a summary of these measures. Section IV describes in some detail the primary mitigation measure for agriculture – an Agricultural Lands Stewardship Plan.

## Table ES-1 Potential Strategies

*Note to reviewers: These strategies are still in the process of development. Feel free to make suggestions for additions or deletions.*

### Group A: Potential strategies to help maintain farming in the Delta

**Strategy 1:** Improve flood protection

**Strategy 2:** Water Management: Maintain or improve water supply (underdevelopment)

**Strategy 3:** Water Management: Improve water quality (under development)

**Strategy 4:** Water Management: Prevent or reduce high groundwater levels (under development)

**Strategy 5:** Water Management: Remove sediment (under development)

**Strategy 6:** Control terrestrial weeds

**Strategy 6a:** Reinvigorate Delta County Weed Management Areas

**Strategy 6b:** Prioritize invasive weed targets for Delta-wide eradication

**Strategy 6c:** Encourage Use of Weed-Free Construction Materials

**Strategy 7:** Reduce conflict between agriculture and nearby habitat lands by creating a "good neighbor" policy

**Strategy 8:** Work with other interests to explore the value of reinstating state funding of Williamson Act subventions

**Strategy 9:** Work with counties to expand Williamson Act authorized uses to include open space/habitat lands in Williamson Act Preserves

**Strategy 10:** Investigate options for *in lieu* tax revenue for counties (under development)

**Strategy 11:** Provide for Agricultural Conservation Easements

### Group B: Potential strategies that provide incentives for conservation on farmland

**Strategy 12:** Partner with others to maintain and enhance environmental quality on farmland

**Strategy 13:** Compensate farmers to manage agricultural land as habitat for wildlife

**Strategy 14:** Provide incentives for farmers to take part in a market based conservation program

### Group C: Potential strategies to manage land for purposes other than conventional crop production

**Strategy 15:** Provide technical and financial assistance to stabilize or reverse land subsidence on Delta islands

**Strategy 16:** Assist landowners to produce and sell greenhouse gas offset credits in the AB 32 Cap-and-Trade program

**Strategy 17:** Compensate farmers to manage habitat lands

**Group D: Potential strategies that provide for economic development and other benefits** *Note to reviewers: This section is in the early stages of development. . Strategies may be deleted or added as work continues on this section.*

**Strategy 18:** Offset economic effects of BDCP on agricultural infrastructure and/or concentric economic impacts, including transportation

**Strategy 19:** Establish a Delta Economic Development Corporation

**Strategy 20:** Support opportunities to coordinate with others in helping to maintain a sustainable agricultural social and economic community in the Delta Region consistent with ecosystem conservation and restoration activities, including with Rural-Urban Connections Strategy programs

**Strategy 21:** Make the regulatory system work better for farmers, including possible Delta regional (or sub-region) permits

**Strategy 22:** Provide technical and financial assistance for farmers to manage land for alternative revenues such as recreation and tourism

**Strategy 23:** Designate carbon sequestration and subsidence reversal crops as agricultural production for regulatory and incentive programs